

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1149
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, IS, JO
SUBJ: WEIZMAN VISITS WEST BANK, JUNE 20

REF: JERUSALEM 1673 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: ISRAELI DEFMIN WEIZMAN VISITED NABLUS AND HEBRON,
AS WELL AS NEARBY ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS, JUNE 20. EXHIBITING
UNPRECEDENTED FLEXIBILITY, HE APPROVED IN NABLUS EXPANSION
OF THE MUNICIPAL ELECTRICAL PLANT, DRILLING OF NEW WATER WELLS
AND STRICTER CONTROLS ON SECURITY SEARCHES. IN HEBRON, HE
APPROVED THE RETURN OF TWO WELL KNOWN DEPORTEES, IMPROVEMENTS
OF A LOCAL HOSPITAL AND INCREASED ELECTRICAL POWER. IN THE
SETTLEMENTS, WEIZMAN REPORTEDLY OFFERED GENERAL SUPPORT BUT
REITERATED GOI RESPECT FOR PRIVATE ARAB PROPERTY. THE ARAB
MAYORS ARE PLEASED AND INITIAL ARABIC PRESS REACTION IS UN-
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USUALLY POSITIVE. END SUMMARY.

2. ISRAELI DEFMIN WEIZMAN VISITED NABLUS AND HEBRON JUNE 20
ALONG WITH IDF COORDINATOR FOR OCCUPIED TERRITORIES GENERAL
ORLY AND WEST BANK MILGOV BEN-ELIEZER. ACCORDING TO THE MAYOR
OF NABLUS, WHO SPOKE TO US, AND MILITARY SOURCES CITED BY
THE JERUSALEM POST, THE VISIT HAD BEEN SCHEDULED FOR SOME TIME.

NEVERTHELESS, WEIZMAN'S UNUSUALLY FORTHCOMING MANNER IN DEALING WITH PROBLEMS OF THE ARAB MUNICIPALITIES AND THE TIMING OF THE VISIT SO SOON AFTER WEIZMAN'S WIDELY REPORTED DISAGREEMENTS WITH BEGIN OVER RESPONSES TO US QUESTIONS ON THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK PROMPTED WIDE COVERAGE AND SPECULATION IN THE ARAB PRESS.

3. IN NABLUS, WEIZMAN MET WITH MAYOR BASSAM SHAKA', REPUTED TO BE THE MOST NATIONALIST MAYOR ON THE WEST BANK. NO SEPARATE VISITS TO TRADITIONAL LEADERS WERE REPORTED IN CONTRAST WITH THE PROTOCOL ADOPTED BY THE MILGOV GENERAL JUNE 19. (REFTEL). ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, CONFIRMED BY THE MAYOR, WEIZMAN QUICKLY CUT THREE GORDIAN KNOTS:

(A) BY ALLOWING IMPORTATION OF THREE ELECTRICAL GENERATORS TO ENABLE THE MUNICIPALITY TO SUPPLY ELECTRICITY INDEPENDENTLY OF THE ISRAELI POWER GRID;
(B) BY APPROVING DRILLING OF TWO OR MORE WATER WELLS AND, MOREOVER, VOLUNTEERING TO HELP FINANCE THE COST OF THE DRILL;
(C) BY PROMISING TO RESTRICT IDF ENTRY INTO PRIVATE HOMES AND DISCOURAGE INSULTS ALLEGEDLY DIRECTED AT THE ARAB POPULATION BY OCCUPATION FORCES.

4. SHAKA' TOLD US THAT THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE VISIT WAS EXCELLENT, AND HE WAS PLEASED HE NOW HAD AUTHORITY TO IMPLEMENT DEVELOPMENT PLANS. THE MAYOR COMMENTED THAT IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION THAT WEIZMAN'S DECISIONS WERE STUDIED, AND NOT TAKEN ON THE SPUR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF THE MOMENT.

5. IN HEBRON, WEIZMAN APPROVED THE RETURN OF AHMAD HAMZA NATSHAH DEPORTED SHORTLY BEFORE THE 1976 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WHEN DR. NATSHAH WAS MOUNTING A CHALLENGE TO FORMER MAYOR SHEIKH JA'ABARI'S 40 YEAR RULE. THE FORMER MUFTI SHEIKH 'ARIFAH ALSO WILL BE ALLOWED TO RETURN PERMANENTLY TO THE WEST BANK. IN ADDITION, HEBRON'S MAYOR INFORMS US THAT WEIZMAN APPROVED IMPROVEMENTS IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTRICAL PLANTS AND THE GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL. AFTER VISITING THE CURRENT MAYOR, WEIZMAN REPORT-EDLY CALLED UPON FORMER MAYOR SHEIKH JA'ABRI.

6. IN THE COURSE OF THE DAY, WEIZMAN ALSO MET WITH ISRAELI SETTLERS OF QARNEI SHOMRON AND KIRYAT ARBA. ACCORDING TO THE "JERUSALEM POST", WEIZMAN SEEMED TO HAVE PLEASED THEM WITH "PROMISES OF BETTER DAYS." HA'ARETZ" (LITANI) REPORTS WEIZMAN EITERATED GOI POLICY THAT PRIVATE (ARAB) LANDS WOULD NOT BE SUBJECT TO EXPROPRIATION FOR EXPANSION OF SETTLEMENTS. DEMONSTRATORS AT KIRYAT ARBA REPORTEDLY PROTESTED GOI FAILURE TO DEVELOP THAT SETTLEMENT AND WERE INVITED BY WEIZMAN TO TAKE PART IN HIS MEETINGS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SETTLEMENT.

7. IN ITS EDITORIAL JUNE 21, THE PRO-PLO ARABIC DAILY "AL FAJR" CAREFULLY DISTINGUISHED BETWEEN MUNICIPAL COOPERATION WITH WEIZMAN TO DEVELOP WEST BANK CITIES AND COLLABORATION WITH BEGIN'S AUTONOMY PROPOSALS. "CITIZENS AT ALL LEVELS INSIST THAT THESE DECISIONS SHOULD NOT CARRY ANY POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND SHOULD NOT BE LINKED WITH THE AUTONOMY PROPOSAL WHICH IS REJECTED IN PRINCIPLE," AL FAJR NOTED.

8. COMMENT: IN COMING TO GRIPS WITH SHAKA' AND NABLUS ELECTRICAL PROJECT, WEIZMAN HAS TAKEN THE WEST BANK BULL BY ITS HORNS. WEIZMAN'S TRIP AND FORTHCOMING DECISIONS WERE VERY SIGNIFICANT. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT "AL FAJR," WITH MAYORS PROMINENT ON ITS BOARD OF DIRECTORS, HAS HASTENED TO PUT A SEAL OF APPROVAL ON WEIZMAN-MUNICIPALITY COOPERATION. WEIZMAN HAS AGAIN DEMON-
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STRATED THAT HE IS A MAN WHO CAN GET ALONG WITH ARABS.
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